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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000468

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SUBJECT: POLAND ON INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT CONFERENCE ON
AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 32155

Classified By: Economic Counselor Richard Rorvig for reasons: 1.4(b, d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: So far Polish officials have not begun to discuss whether to make a pledge at the Afghanistan Conference in Paris in June, let alone the possible amount. Like other European governments, they have been thinking of the Conference in purely political terms. Nevertheless, Afghanistan is a "priority country" for Polish development assistance. Poland continues to fund several development projects implemented through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and as civil-military projects. An inter-agency group has been set up to examine the possibility of leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), but the decision to lead one has not been taken, and no information is available regarding the composition or funding for the civilian component of a potential PRT. End summary.

No Decision on Whether to Pledge

¶2. (SBU) On April 11, EmbOffs delivered reftel demarche to Ilona Korchut, who handles Afghanistan matters in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Development Cooperation and to Dominik Malek, the MFA's Afghanistan desk officer. They stated that the exact purpose of the Conference still has to be decided, and that European nations have been thinking of the Conference chiefly in political terms. Malek noted that on April 9, representatives of EU Member States met to discuss the Conference, but the discussion was entirely political. Neither Korchut nor Malek could say anything about whether Poland would make a pledge, let alone what the amount of any pledge might be. Korchut also noted that Poland cannot make a multi-year pledge because of how its budget process works. Malek stated that Poland is a relatively poor country whose top development priorities were neighboring Ukraine and Belarus. According to the Polish Ministry of Finance, there is no government-to-government debt owed by Afghanistan to Poland.

Afghanistan "Priority Country" For Development Aid

¶3. (SBU) Korchut stated that Afghanistan was declared a "priority country" for Polish development assistance in 2004. Since then, about 20 Polish-funded projects have been undertaken, either through NGOs or as civil-military projects. The Department of Development Cooperation's 2006 report lists three projects implemented in Afghanistan in

2006 by NGOs: (1) construction of school facilities and water tanks in Afghanistan, (2) facilitating access to potable water for the inhabitants of Kapisa province, and (3) reconstruction and expansion of an operating theater in Mazar-e Sharif. In 2006, Poland spent PLN 1,661,253 on these projects. Korchut stated Poland spent PLN 8 million on five projects implemented through NGOs, and another 11 civil-military projects, in 2007. In 2008, the budget calls for expenditures of PLN 8.5 million. No decisions have been made yet for 2009. Korchut noted that one problem has been the difficulty in finding partners (i.e., NGOs) wanting to work in Afghanistan. (Note: If one looks at the trend of Polish support in dollar terms, it is important to bear in mind the decline the dollar against the zloty. At the end of 2006, 1 USD equalled PLN 2.91. As of April 15, 1 USD = PLN 2.16. End note.)

14. (SBU) EconOff stated that the Afghan Ministry of Finance's list of donor contributions lists a Polish pledge of USD 100,000 in 2004, which the Afghans did not show as having been committed or disbursed. Malek, who recently returned from a six-month posting in Kabul, noted there is a difference between funds provided to the Afghan government, and funds expended for Afghan development. Korchut said she would look into the matter further.

Poland Still Examining A PRT

15. (SBU) Emboffs asked about support that might be delivered through the civilian component of a Polish PRT. Malek stated that a decision to lead a PRT has not been made.

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High-level discussions are continuing within the Polish government. He asked how important it was to the USG that Poland lead a PRT, adding that an inter-agency PRT group, with representatives from the MFA, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior, had recently been set up, and would have its first meeting in about two weeks.

16. (C) Korchut observed that there were different models of PRT, and noted that the civil-military cooperation called for by most PRT models was new to the Polish government. Malek obliquely indicated that within the Polish government communication between the civilian agencies and the Polish military has been difficult. In any case, the shape of a Polish PRT -- assuming there will be one -- should become clearer once the inter-agency group begins to meet.
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